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ABSTRACT

This is an interpretive summary of information from a multiple case study of 11 school districts in California, Arizona, and Nevada conducted in the spring and fall of 1992 as part of a larger set of strategies to work on solutions to the challenges facing schools in metropolitan areas of the Pacific Southwest. Rather than presenting a set of empirical findings, this paper constructs a hypothetical district as a composite ideal, the "high-performance district." The high-performance district has a distinctive pattern of organization attributed to: (1) the school board, the superintendent and other administration, (2) the structure of authority and incentives, and (3) school programs and support facilities. Its programs are the logical outcomes of its history, and characteristically include innovation, a multicultural focus, high standards, and flexible organizational designs. The teachers are regraded as competent, treated as professionals, and provided with inservice educational programs. Community relations are characterized by respect for the cultural integrity of diverse households and opportunities for parent and family involvement. Four tables and three figures present information from the case studies. (Contains 12 references.) (SLD)

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Contrasting District Practices

School Districts That Effectively Serve Educationally Disadvantaged Children

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Contrasting District Practices

School Districts That Effectively Serve Educationally Disadvantaged Children

Ronald G. Corwin and Cristi L. Carson

September 1994

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The Southwest Regional Laboratory (SWRL) is a nonprofit, public educational agency that exists to address challenges resulting from changing demographics and increasing numbers of at-risk children in the Metropolitan Pacific Southwest. The Laboratory addresses its mission by engaging in research, development, evaluation, training, technical assistance, and policy analysis.

CONTENTS

Part I: Overview 1
Rationale for the District-Level Focus 2
The Approach Used in This Report 3

Part II: The Case Study 5
Step 1: Identifying a Pool of Candidate Districts 5
Step 2: Selecting Districts 6
Step 3: Conducting Site Visits 6
Limitations of the Study 7
District Characteristics 8

Part III: Extreme Cases 13
High-Performance Districts 13
Low-Performance Districts 23

Part IV: The High-Performance District in Profile 33
District and School Organization 33
Educational Programs 40
Teachers 41
Community Relations 42
Support Services 43

Part V: The Community Context 45
History and Culture of the Community 45
District Size and Growth 47

Part VI: Summary and Conclusions 49
District and School Organization 49
Educational Programs 51
Teachers 51
Community Relations 51
Support Services 52
The Context 53

References 59

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1 Demographic Changes Experienced by Eight Selected Districts 9
Table 2 Demographic Characteristics of the Eight Districts 11
Table 3 Community, Organizational, and Teacher/Program Characteristics of the Eight Districts 31
Table 4 The High-Performance District 54

Figure 1 Percentage Changes in Ethnic Composition Within Districts 10
Figure 2 Raw Change Scores—California Districts 11
Figure 3 Raw Change Scores—Arizona Districts 11

PART I: OVERVIEW

This is an interpretative summary of information extracted from a multiple case study of 11 school districts in California, Arizona, and Nevada conducted by the Southwest Regional Laboratory (SWRL) in the spring and fall of 1992[1]. The study began in 1990, as part of a larger set of strategies adopted by SWRL to work on solutions to urgent challenges facing schools in the metropolitan areas of the Pacific Southwest. The underlying premise was that the central challenge is the *accelerating* pace of diversity of children placed at risk. The metropolitan areas of the region received greater numbers of poor ethnic and language minority households during the 1980s than did all of the other regions of the United States combined. Only Florida has paralleled California's dramatic demographic changes.

With these demographic changes, the numbers of educationally disadvantaged children in the region have increased dramatically. Educationally disadvantaged children are those who are at risk of failure because of adverse conditions in their sociocultural backgrounds. There are several sources of educational disadvantage, including English language proficiency, racial/ethnic background, family poverty and composition, and parents' education (see Natriello, McDill, & Pallas, 1990). The problems associated with English language proficiency and immigration of low-income, racial, and ethnic minorities are especially compelling in California and Arizona, two of the states in the study.

The study yielded a wealth of richly detailed information, but it is not our purpose to systematically present and document the empirical findings. Rather, we have combed the study for insights into district characteristics that seem to work well for socially and educationally disadvantaged children. We were looking for illustrations of effectiveness rather than frequencies; instances, not generalizations. The result is an inventory of desirable characteristics to guide districts seeking to improve the opportunities of educationally disadvantaged children.

We have approached this task by constructing an extreme, hypothetical district, or a composite *ideal type* profiling characteristics and approaches that seem to have worked somewhere. It is presented as a model, a set of standards, not an empirical generalization. The profile will be referred to as *"the high-performance district."*

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[1] The study was directed by Robert Dentler while a visiting senior scientist at SWRL. He is currently a senior fellow with the John W. McCormack Institute of Public Affairs, University of Massachusetts, Boston. The field work and analyses for the original study were conducted by: Jerry Bailey, Cristina Bodinger-de Uriarte, Cristi Carson, Ronald Corwin, Marcella Dianda, Robert Dentler, Anne Hafner, Younghee Jang, Diane Manuel, Colleen Montoya, Naida Tushnet, and David van Brockhuizen. Although this report grows out of work done by Dentler and his colleagues, the authors take full responsibility for interpretation of the data and the accuracy of the analysis.

We believe that adopting characteristics of the model is likely to improve a district's ability to serve educationally disadvantaged children. However, it is important to keep in mind that the features profiled are being offered only as credible *suggestions* based on our interpretations of illustrations and anecdotal information drawn from the case study. Moreover, we do not presume that all elements of the model can be present in any one district.

The case study reached both optimistic and pessimistic conclusions. On the one hand, it indicates that district leaders who are concerned about the plight of educationally disadvantaged children do find ways to deliver effective instruction to educationally disadvantaged children. On the other hand, perhaps the most compelling pattern of evidence is that commitment to helping educationally disadvantaged children hinges on the fate of local community history, culture, and politics. Who holds local offices and serves on the school board, and the mandate they give to the superintendent are critically important. Consequently, there may be thresholds beyond which a school district is nearly powerless to help educationally disadvantaged children until the external sociopolitical environment changes.

Rationale for the District-Level Focus

Many people are inclined to assign final responsibility for what students do and do not know to what goes on in school, and ultimately to what teachers do in their classrooms. While, certainly, the classroom is where one actually sees learning take place, by analogy, it is comparable to attributing the effectiveness of Ford Motor Company to the talents of assembly-line workers. Our rationale for focusing on the school district is that the classroom is a small component of a larger social system.

The consequence of failing to focus on this larger system is evident in the stream of so-called "effective schools" research (e.g., Block, 1983; Lezotte, 1994). It has told us a lot about what good schools are like. We also have learned, if we did not already know, that there are some bad ones. The message is that schooling outcomes depend entirely on the idiosyncrasies of particular schools and, for better or worse, on the anomalous skills and interests of particular principals and teachers. The indisputable outcome of an idiosyncratic education system is that some individuals will benefit — and others will lose.

If we are forced to assume that schools are responsible for learning outcomes, we also must accept the unfeasible prospect of undertaking systemic reform one school at a time. Accordingly, the voucher movement, charter schools, site-based management, and other restructuring reform efforts have given up on top-down approaches. We are being

offered school-by-school, teacher-by-teacher approaches to improve the education of 46,000,000 children in well over 100,000 schools.

But, relying on a few valiant and busy principals and teachers to reform education is ultimately myopic. As Cuban (1984) has observed, the preoccupation with the local school site and the principal's leadership obscures the pivotal role of school boards and superintendents in finding and allocating resources, providing incentives, and legitimating reform efforts (David, 1989; Hill & Bonan, 1991). Therefore, this report starts from the premise that the way classrooms function is heavily influenced by the incentives and resources controlled by a school district.

The Approach Used in This Report

We began this task by scanning each of the 11 case reports to identify district characteristics, structures, and policies associated with extreme changes in test scores. The reports were read in three groups based on how much improvement or deterioration there had been in the districts' test scores, as will be described in Part II: The Case Study. Positive and negative attributes mentioned in each case were recorded. This step yielded a list of attributes that seemed reasonable candidates to consider in this effort to construct an ideal high-performance school district.

The details of each case were then analyzed using the attribute list as a mental overlay to detect features that were present or absent in more than one situation. This approach yielded a more refined list of specific attributes. However, what is important is the combination of attributes, i.e., the *profile*. We assume that some otherwise positive attributes will remain dormant unless accompanied by certain other attributes; that the presence of a few detrimental conditions can overwhelm otherwise favorable circumstances; and that some attributes can compensate for the absence of others. What follows are the authors' interpretations based on these assumptions and procedures.

We believe that the interpretative approach we are taking is better suited to our objective of identifying patterns than commonly used alternatives, such as regression analysis. The latter requires us to pretend that the explanatory variables operate independently of one another and therefore leaves no opportunity to detect effects that accumulate from interactions among clusters of attributes.

PART II: THE CASE STUDY

Because the ideal type was drawn from the SWRL case study, it will be instructive to review the procedures used. Designed to identify some promising approaches that metropolitan communities and public school districts are taking to help educationally disadvantaged students, the case study was carried out in three steps: *identifying potential districts, selecting high and low performers,* and *conducting the site visits.*

Step 1: Identifying a Pool of Candidate Districts

The first step was to identify a pool of exceptionally challenged public school districts within metropolitan statistical areas in California, Arizona, and Nevada that have experienced extreme changes (either increases or decreases) in student achievement. A challenged district was defined as one that between 1980 and 1989 was burdened by an increase in the combined effect of one or more of the following: (a) total number of students; (b) proportion of minority students; (c) proportion of limited-English proficient (LEP) students; and/or (d) proportion of students from low-income homes.[2]

From the total pool of challenged districts, 11 were selected based on the magnitude of change in student achievement in each district, which was estimated from the amount of overall increase or decrease in available standardized test scores. For California, measures of change in student achievement between 1984-85 and 1989-90 were computed as the differences between the mean California Assessment Program (CAP) scores for each district between periods. Similar measures of change in overall student achievement were obtained from standardized test data for the Arizona and Nevada districts between 1986-87 and 1989-90.

Population counts and indicators of poverty, language proficiency, and ethnicity were obtained from a variety of sources, including U.S. Census reports, the California Basic Education Data System (CBEDS), CAP, and Arizona State Department of Education reports. Each district was assigned a composite change index score based on positive change (increase) between 1980 and 1989 in total enrollment and in the proportional enrollment of minority, LEP, and poor students. The 30 districts in California and the 10 districts in Arizona scoring highest on this composite index were examined, and eliminated if their total composite score was due to the overwhelming influence of only one factor. Changes in minority population, in language proficiency, and poverty were given priority

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[2] There are only two large metropolitan districts in Nevada. Both were included in the study.

over changes in population size, and preference was given to districts with high absolute levels of poor and minority students.

Step 2: Selecting Districts

In the second step, 11 districts, representing a wide range of improvement or deterioration in test scores, were selected from this pool. They were sorted into three groups: (a) "high performers" exhibiting improvements in test scores; (b) "stable performers," whose test scores showed little change; and (c) "low performers" demonstrating declines in test scores. Six were located in California, three in Arizona, and two in Nevada. To provide further focus, it was decided to concentrate on elementary schools.

For this report, we have selected *eight* districts from the original pool of 11. Six are from California and two are from Arizona. This selection is based on magnitude of change in the average student performance during the time intervals of interest, in comparison to the mean change for all districts in each state. Five of the eight districts experienced an improvement in test scores, while three declined.

Step 3: Conducting Site Visits

The third step was to carry out the site visits during the spring and fall of 1992. Each district was visited for approximately five days by pairs of field researchers, who used multiple case study procedures developed and used by Dentler, Baltzell, and Chabotar (1983); Louis, Kell, and Dentler (1984); and Yin (1986). These procedures provide comparability among cases that have been selected systematically and purposively and analyzed using a common set of procedures and standards.

A topical agenda of general questions was developed and arranged for use with school and community respondents occupying diverse statuses and roles. In addition, specific questions for respondents were prepared and reviewed. The data collection group consisted of professional staff employed at SWRL as educational researchers and developers, anthropologists or applied linguists, sociologists, and journalists. Teams were composed of mixed gender and diverse racial and ethnic background whenever feasible.

In each district, the field researchers interviewed school board members, administrators, teachers, parents, and members of health departments and law enforcement agencies. Some interviews were conducted one-on-one; others paired the interviewers with one or two respondents at a time; and still others entailed group interviews with three to five respondents at a time. Researchers also conducted observational visits to at least two schools and to central administrative offices. They also took advantage of opportunities to

attend faculty meetings, school board meetings, and other assemblies as these came up in the course of the visits. In three of the largest districts, it was necessary to make a second visit.

The recorded interviews, observation notes, and documentary materials were filed. The case reports were coded, photocopied, and classified under 29 topical headings to create standardized files for cross-case comparisons.

Limitations of the Study

The case study on which this report is based had several limitations that should be taken into consideration. First, difficulties were encountered in developing a sound measure of change in student achievement over time. In particular, different standardized tests were used in different districts, and districts and schools did not consistently test all LEP students. Second, the appropriate 1990 Census data were not available at the time of the study, which reduced the power of the demographic variables in accounting for detailed differences among the communities. Third, many school districts did not have financial, personnel, and related records from the recent past.

The methodological issues encountered are commonly associated with this type of research. They include:

1. The small number of cases cannot be treated as representative of districts in the region.

2. The effectiveness of a district was assessed only by its test scores.

3. Different time intervals were used to measure demographic changes and changes in test schools.

4. Districts and schools did not consistently test all LEP students.

5. The case studies were conducted two years after the time periods that were examined for demographic and achievement change.

6. The persons who did the field work had full knowledge of whether the district they were in was a "good" district or a "bad" district, which could have biased their questions and interpretation of responses.

7. Information on within-district variation is necessarily lost when individuals' test scores are aggregated to the district level.

While these difficulties prevent us from generalizing from the data, that is not our purpose. We are looking for instances of exemplary practices—some evidence that particular characteristics, policies, or practices have seemed to work somewhere. The data, then, are more than adequate for our limited objective of proposing a tentative ideal type to serve as a source of suggestions to districts looking for some insights and guidance for improvement.

District Characteristics

For purposes of this report, 3 of the original 11 districts that were in the middle of the distribution of our measures of change in test scores were excluded. Two of these cases are located in Nevada.[3] The 8 cases selected differ widely in how the composition of their student body changed, how they responded to the changes, and the net effect that this had on overall student performance. Table 1 summarizes the differences in how student bodies in the 8 districts changed over the 10-year time period. Figure 1 summarizes the demographic characteristics of the districts at the time of the interviews. For the remainder of this report, the California districts are numbered C1 through C6, and the Arizona districts are represented as A1 and A2. The columns in Table 1 represent the proportional change in the numbers of minority, LEP, and low-income students served by the district. The magnitude of the change is depicted by plus signs. Each plus sign represents a .5 standard deviation increment above the mean change experienced by the districts in the respective states.

Roughly three types of change were experienced by the districts. Half experienced substantial increases in two variables, the proportion of minority students and LEP students served (Districts C1, C2, C3, and C6). Three were severely impacted by simultaneous increases in three variables, the proportion of minority students, LEP students, and low-income students served (Districts C4, C5, and A1). The remaining district (District A2) was impacted by simultaneous increases in two variables, the proportion of minority students and students from low-income families.[4]

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[3] Possibly Nevada is not experiencing the same rates of change as the other two states.

[4] The single largest effect on test scores is the income of parents.

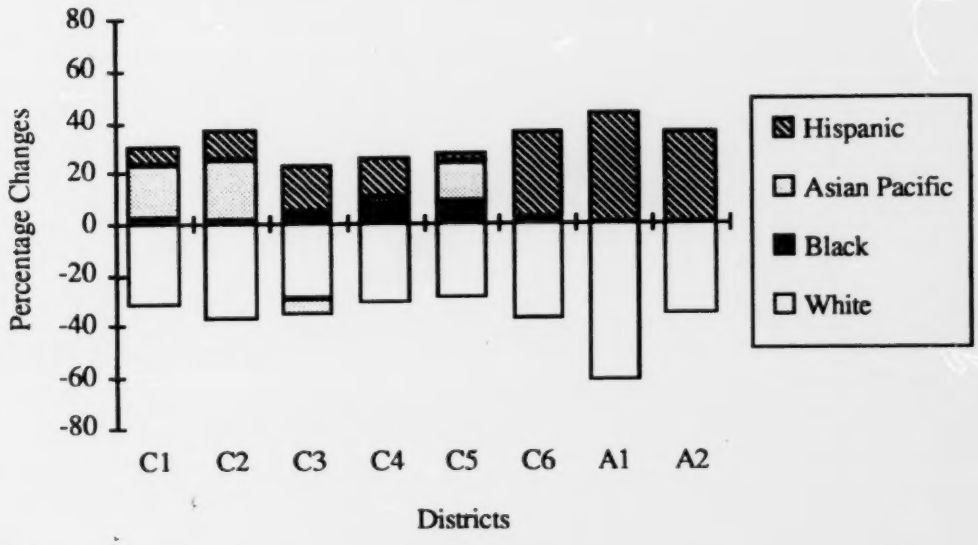
Table 1
*Demographic Changes Experienced by Eight Selected Districts**

District	Minority Students	LEP Students	Low-Income Students
C1	+++	++++	
C2	+++++	+++	
C3	++	+++	
C4	+	++	++
C5	+	++	+++
C6	+++++	+++	
A1	++++	++	++
A2	+++		+

*Each + represents a .5 standard deviation increment above the mean change experienced by the districts in the respective states.

All eight districts were impacted by increases in the proportion of minority students served. The percentage changes in ethnic composition for the districts are presented in Figure 1. Three of the eight districts were impacted by increases in both the proportion of Asian and Hispanic students served, and all three experienced accompanying increases in the proportion of LEP students served (Districts C1, C2, and C5). The challenges presented to these districts by this type of change are magnified due to the large variety of native languages represented in their LEP student populations (Spanish, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, Vietnamese, Thai, and Hmong). The remaining five districts were impacted by increases in the numbers of Hispanic students, accompanied by increases in LEP students and students from low-income families.

Figure 1
Percentage Changes in Ethnic Composition Within Districts



The changes in overall student performance for the California districts are depicted in Figure 2, and the changes for the Arizona districts are presented in Figure 3. The original intent of the selection process was to identify districts that had experienced both extreme achievement changes and extreme demographic changes. However, after regressing the district achievement scores on all four demographic change variables, it became evident that this would not be possible because the districts that experienced high achievement changes were not impacted by extreme demographic changes. As the demographic impact increases, the expected value for achievement decreases. This creates a ceiling effect for how well districts that have undergone such dramatic changes can be expected to perform.

This effect becomes evident when the magnitude of change in the eight districts selected for this report is compared to the mean change experienced by all of the districts within California and within Arizona. The highest performing district in California (C1) was then barely above the state mean in 1984, and although it continued to increase through 1989, the magnitude of the change did not keep pace with the state average (see Figure 2). By comparison, three of the districts with low-performance scores in 1984 had room to improve. And, their test scores did increase substantially above the state average. In Arizona, the state mean actually declined between 1986 and 1989 (see Figure 3).

Consequently, the one district that was able to improve against this tide of deterioration appears as outstanding, even though the magnitude of improvement is very modest.

Figure 2
Raw Change Scores—California Districts

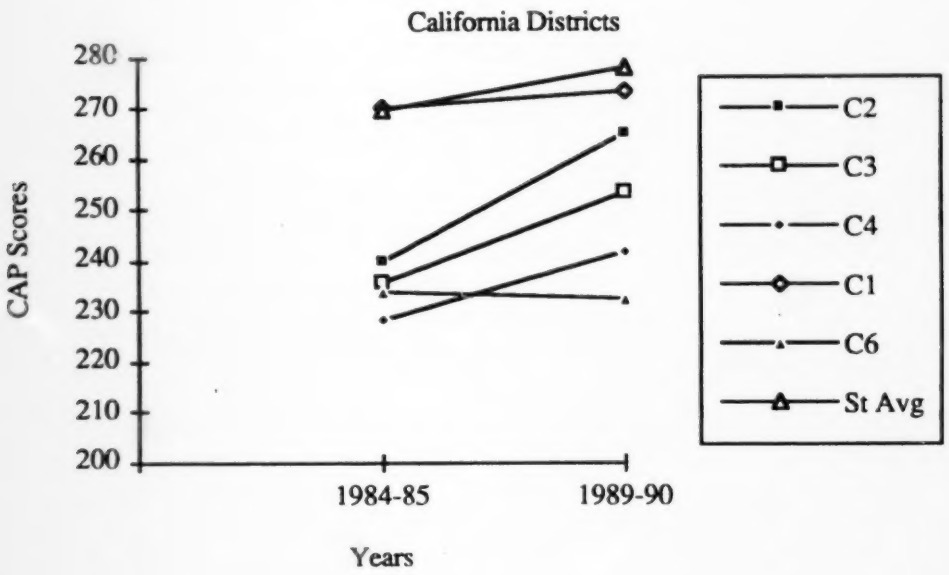
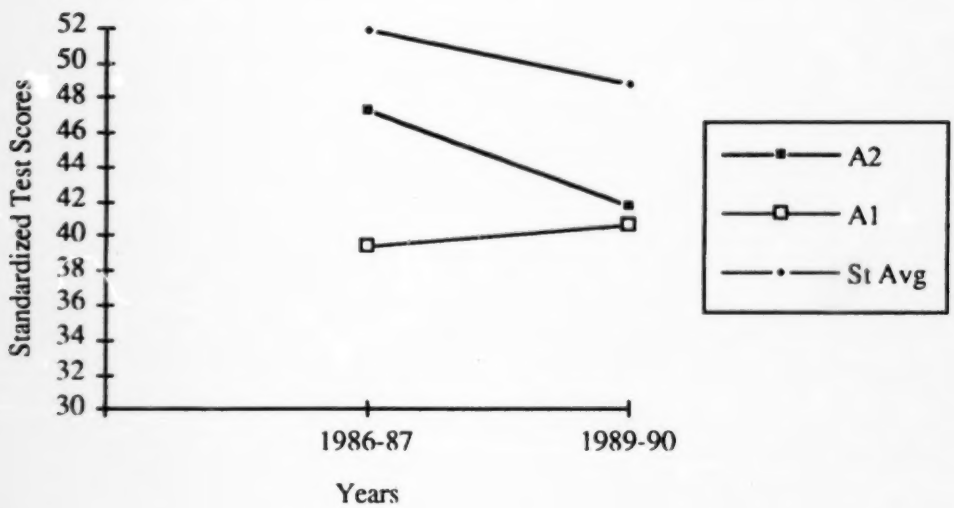


Figure 3
Raw Change Scores—Arizona Districts



PART III: EXTREME CASES

To sharpen and illustrate some differences among districts, this section profiles eight extreme or "deviant cases" whose test scores changed the most between 1984 and 1989. Four of the districts exhibited the most improved scores, and the other four either stagnated or deteriorated. The demographic characteristics of each district are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2
Demographic Characteristics of the Eight Districts

Demographic characteristics	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	A1	A2
Total # of students	3,500	3,200	6,200	9,980	75,000	8,800	6,200	12,640
Elementary & middle schools	7	5	10	13	81	11	7	15
Ethnic composition (%)	41 H* 22 AA* 29 A*	54 H 1 AA 30 A	67 H 6 AA 3 A	46 H 7 AA 28 A	35 H 11 AA 18 A	90 H 1 AA 5 A	70 H 9 AA	72 H 3 AA
LEP (%)	29	26	29	24	20	40	33	18
Poverty (%)	15	16	29	27	39	29	69	54

**Note:* H = Hispanic, AA = African American, A = Asian

High-Performance Districts

Five of the districts experienced test score gains, one in Arizona (A1) and four in California (C1, C2, C3, and C4). However, because California district C4 maintained a low level of performance in comparison to the overall gain in test scores throughout the state, it was classified as a low-performance district. District A1 increased its student performance by more than one standard deviation in comparison to the average negative decline in test scores experienced by districts throughout Arizona. Districts C2 and C3 experienced substantial test score gains, in comparison to the average gain in the state, and both were able to move up in state rankings. District C1, which was a high-performing district in 1980, was able to maintain its performance throughout the subsequent 10 years, although it lost ground in terms of its ranking in the state; it started out just above the state average in 1980 and finished just below the state average in 1989.

District A1

This district went from 70% Anglo to 70% Hispanic between 1980 and 1992. A small K-8 district (6,000 students), it consists of six elementary schools, a preschool, and one junior high, and it employs 300 teachers and 27 administrators. In some schools, up to two thirds of the students are from homes below the federal poverty line. One in three students is classified as LEP. The district calculates the student transiency rate at 70%.

One third of the Hispanics have lived in the community for several generations; the majority are recent arrivals from Mexico. There is an undercurrent of resentment toward the newcomers on the part of the long-time residents, but there has been no overt racial or ethnic conflict. Potential racial tensions have been minimized by the selective out-migration of wealthy Anglos, leaving leadership vacancies for both newcomers and the traditional Hispanic community.

Nor are there permanent cleavages among school board members, who all seem united on the same priorities. Some people interviewed insist that there is no one business, person, or group in the community, or on the board, with a disproportionately high amount of influence. It appears that the board runs the district without much interference from other power brokers in the community.

In the early 1980s, the board became predominantly Hispanic, and with that shift, the entire LEA was transformed into an unconventional multicultural program. The superintendent, along with his predecessor, shares with the board an intense conviction about the importance of creating a multicultural school system and helping language minorities and other educationally disadvantaged children achieve in school. The district has a welcoming attitude toward new arrivals and takes pride in the programs it has created to help them settle in. The mandate is to treat all children equitably and sensitively. Students are not grouped, tracked, or treated differently because of their backgrounds.

Bilingual education is the centerpiece of the district. During the past decade, funds allocated for this purpose increased over 650%. As the district increased by nearly 2,000 students, 85 bilingual teachers were added. In addition, parents and other community volunteers have active roles in the schools. Nearly one third of the students participate in programs for Spanish-speaking students and their families. (However, comparable language programs for Asians and Native Americans, who together make up 3% of the student body, do not exist.)

The board majority and superintendent and administrative team are Hispanics who work closely together and support one another. The superintendent and other administrators spend much of their time in the schools. Some board members also visit the

schools regularly. Teachers indicate that they trust, like, and work smoothly with administrators.

Steadfastly committed to the district's priorities, the superintendent maintains firm surveillance and control over critical activities in the district. Working with a handpicked, lean administrative staff, he spends much of his time recruiting and interviewing new teachers. One third of the teachers hired in recent years are minorities. He also personally selects all principals. A leader in state professional organizations, he has aggressively gone after and obtained federal contracts and grants for the district. An imposing 13% of the district's budget comes from federal funds.

The district's strategy is to reach parents as well as children, and to reach the children at an early age. It employs a full-time communications specialist who publishes newsletters for parents in both English and Spanish. The district advertises 36 separate programs, many of which include parents or other community members. They include classes for adults (with free day care), an exemplary preschool and preschool library, a latchkey program, after-school homework, scheduled parent-teacher conferences, a "book and breakfast" club, an all-day kindergarten, a new, innovative school for grades K-3, peer counseling, peer tutoring, a mental health team, a whole language "mastery" program, interschool competition in music and art, a third-grade alumni club, and many recognition ceremonies. Each school also has a full-time nurse and half-time social worker and counselor, in addition to secretaries, clerks, and parent volunteers.

To be a principal, one must share the superintendent's commitment to meeting the needs of language minorities and other educationally disadvantaged children. The principals who were interviewed share several similarities, including: firm and commanding leadership styles; Hispanic, bilingual backgrounds; unwavering commitment to bilingual, multicultural education; respect for teachers' opinions; intense involvement in the daily affairs of the school; rapport with members of the community; and a determination to work closely with and help parents. In hiring teachers, they give first priority to bilingual skills.

In recent years, the administration has managed to raise the salaries of teachers and administrators from among the lowest to among the highest in the areas, notwithstanding a relatively low operating budget. Bilingual teachers receive an additional stipend. Also, teachers are given a bonus for maintaining perfect attendance.

Teachers are generally regarded as competent and enjoy exceptional autonomy and respect. Those interviewed exhibit high morale and say they are respected and consulted and have autonomy over their classrooms. They are provided with several opportunities

each year to participate in in-service professional development workshops, including training in sheltered English techniques.

The schools that were visited embrace a strong thematic focus on language teaching in all of its varied forms. Well-equipped classrooms contain multiage groups of children. In the new K-3 school, bilingual teachers, working with aides, are teamed with English-speaking teachers. Students are treated with respect and affection and have freedom to come and go in the halls and at recess. Hands-on strategies in the sciences have supplanted abstract, text-based instruction, e.g., computations are incorporated into building and flying kites. At the preschool and elementary levels, children participate in leadership and community service, and there are outreach programs to parents, businesses, and other adults. A fundamental strategy is to work closely with parents through home visits, and social and learning programs for parents.

The junior high school, which once had a reputation for student misconduct, and which the community now sees as a potential target of gangs, is an important exception to this picture. There, three administrators and a detective on leave from the police department walk through the halls with two-way radios in a show of force. Students and outsiders are monitored carefully. The faculty is moving only slowing and cautiously, and with noticeable resistance, toward new approaches and programs.

District C2

This district, whose test scores improved, is comprised largely of Hispanics and Asians. It experienced a 25% increase in Asians over the past decade. One in four students comes from a poverty-level home, three fourths receive a free or reduced lunch, and one third are classified as LEP, representing a 27% increase over a three-year period. The student transiency rate is calculated at 40%.

A small K-8 district, it enrolls 3,000 students in four elementary schools and one junior high. The professional staff consists of four administrators, seven principals and vice principals, and 123 teachers, over 40% of whom have been hired in the past five years. The district also has three full-time psychologists and one districtwide bilingual counselor. It does not have its own health center, but does refer cases to a neighboring community, which provides a wide array of services, including translators for Asian families. With the exception of one Asian administrator and a Hispanic principal, the administration is Anglo, as are 86% of the teachers.

Between 1980 and 1989, as enrollment increased 26%, Anglos declined from 64% to 16% of the district, while Asians increased from 9% to 34%. Hispanics declined only

slightly, from 57% to 50%. Due mainly to the diversity of the Asian immigrants, 18 primary languages are represented in the schools. There are overt tensions between Hispanic and Asians gangs in the area, but they are not evident in the adult community.

The school board, superintendent, and principals seem to work well together. The superintendent is widely regarded as a competent educator. Reportedly, he has a good working relationship with the school board and communicates well, being known as open-minded and willing to listen. He interviews all prospective teachers and visits every school four times a year. He also has formed several committees created to meet challenges in the district. One committee, in particular, which advises every school and the district, is designed to involve parents and other groups in the community in key decisions.

The top administration has experienced considerable turnover in recent years, including six superintendents in eight years. The superintendent has been in the position only one year. Most of the principals also are relatively new. However, other administrators provide stability. In particular, the assistant superintendent, a white female who has been with the district 18 years, has been a stabilizing force. She is informed about changes in the district and about sources of funding for categorical programs, which the district has been successful in obtaining. Also, the other administrators have been with the district several years.

All of the key administrators are positive toward demographic changes in the district. The superintendent accepted the position with full knowledge of the challenges. Accordingly, he has made it a priority to go after grants and programs for limited English speakers and to hire more teachers with bilingual or second-language credentials. The assistant superintendent places high priority on multiculturalism, regarding it as enhancing experience. The director of categorical programs trains teachers to work with language minorities and cultural diversity and seeks bilingual volunteers.

All students have equal access to the entire curriculum regardless of LEP or special needs. Expectations for the students are high. The district places a great deal of emphasis on teaching language, and takes prides in the multicultural aspects of its programs, including its Spanish Reading Program and sheltered English classrooms. While only eight teachers hold bilingual certificates, English as a second language (ESL) teachers and aides are at every school site. In recent years, the district's bilingual program has moved to a team-teaching approach. In each school, a bilingual certificated teacher and two aides help LEP students for three hours a day. Kindergartners are pulled out for half an hour, and upper graders are pulled out for an hour during language arts in Spanish. A Spanish math program is available at the upper grades.

Teachers are encouraged to take a 30-hour program in which they learn how students acquire a second language and how to make LEP students feel comfortable. Those teachers who pass an English language development test receive a bonus. In addition, the district has a large foundation grant to implement a multidisciplinary, cooperative learning program to encourage students to respect cultural differences. The program teaches classroom strategies specifically designed to help LEP students. It also promotes teacher collaboration, thematic integration of different subjects, learning through writing, and using the arts to stimulate thinking and language; and it emphasizes the need to involve community groups and parents.

Some schools also operate programs intended to build self-esteem and a common vocabulary of values. Students are encouraged to look for good behavior and are recognized for their positive actions via notes to parents, check sheets, ice cream, and extra recess.

Other programs available for disadvantaged children include:

- an early intervention program for 4-7 year olds;
- a school improvement program for K-8 students, which encourages collaborative decisionmaking within the school community to meet the educational needs of every student;
- a program for K-8 students to develop fluency in English, to promote positive self-concepts and cross cultural understanding, and to provide equal opportunity of academic achievement;
- a program for K-8 migrant children and families, together with an ancillary program to expand the English language and academic services to immigrant students;
- an enrichment program that integrates arts and literature and provides assistance to children with their homework;
- a school-business partnership program;
- a liaison person who works with migrant families; and
- meetings for parents of migrant families, which include translators and child care.

The multicultural emphasis promoted by the district is, in various ways, evident in the schools and classrooms observed. For example, textbooks and the stories children read have multicultural themes. Teachers recognize ethnic holidays and sponsor multicultural

events. There has been a shift in emphasis from basic, skills-centered instruction to content and application-centered instruction.

Teachers use a wide range of instructional practices and educational approaches, including: paired learning, cooperative learning, cross-age and peer tutoring, and whole group instruction. They also practice interdisciplinary instruction through thematic teaching, the media, and computer-assisted materials. Cultural understanding is incorporated throughout the curriculum. The schools also provide computer education, a university-sponsored writing project, math competitions, history clubs, and special day classes.

Teachers can count on various kinds of support. For example, schools have resource specialists, and teams of specialists are available to teachers who need help with student learning problems and other difficulties. There are programs before and after school for child care, an after-school Title I program promoting student study skills and achievement, and a family math program.

District C3

This relatively small (6,000 student) elementary district experienced a 17% increase in enrollment over the decade, including a 50% increase in LEP students, who now make up half the enrollment. Currently two thirds of the students are Hispanic, up 10% since 1980. Another large minority, Filipinos, increased slightly and now represent 13% of the enrollment. Slightly under one third of the students are on Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC).

The district has 10 elementary schools. Eight of the 10 administrators and two-thirds of the 277 teachers are Anglo. However, 2 administrators (including the superintendent) and 2 of the 10 principals are of Hispanic origin, as are 27% of the teachers. Thirty percent of the teachers have bilingual credentials.

The staff throughout the district—from the superintendent and district office, to principals and teachers—accept the demographic changes that have occurred. Most of them are acutely aware of the growing number of LEP students, and no one commented negatively on new arrivals. The two school board members interviewed believe that the district is meeting the needs of new students very well.

Informants reported that the community generally has a high regard for the school board. Two of the five board members are Hispanic. The board president, an Anglo, is active in the state school boards association. District C3 Board members have a reputation

for working well together and not trying to manage minute details. Several of them have lived in the area for many years.

The administrators, who on average have been with the district over 15 years, work well as a team and have a shared vision of the kind of district they want. The previous superintendent, who was in office for seven years, was regarded as very competent, but he made some enemies. The current superintendent, a Hispanic, has held his position for only one year, but as a long-time member of the district, he has held several key positions over the years. Enthusiastically supported by the other administrators who were interviewed, he is perceived as a highly qualified, risk-taking, and innovative individual who is well connected with influential members of the community. His vision of the district centers around these goals:

- a student-centered, critical thinking curriculum;
- meaningful parent involvement and education through home-school partnerships;
- staff development that emphasizes learning, teaching, knowledge use, and change; and
- shared leadership via open, honest communication at all levels.

The superintendent recently hand-picked three new principals who shared these objectives. The principals interviewed all said that they are supported by the superintendent, and that they are closely aligned with him. One principal, in particular, is very popular among teachers and parents. Parents who were interviewed praised the principals and teachers.

The district has an exemplary bilingual program, in which English-speaking and Spanish-speaking teachers are teamed. Students are nurtured and supported in Spanish until they are ready for English. A comprehensive procedure is used to transfer students from Spanish to English reading. Filipino LEP students are usually placed in sheltered English classes. The administration makes a concerted effort to recruit bilingual teachers, and in the past three years has hired only bilingual and special education teachers. While there is no special bonus for bilingual certification, teachers are paid a stipend for participating in in-service training and for providing after-school services. Teachers spoke highly about the training workshops they attended.

Other programs and facilities include: professional development and needs assessment centers, a resource specialist program for special education students, a Chapter

I program, a migrant program, reading support services for LEP students, a reading specialist program, a game center program for organized recess activities, and a child abuse prevention program. Some schools also support reading labs, child development centers for children 3 to 8 years old, family math programs, and parents-as-teachers programs.

The district has a mentor teacher program that encourages teachers to share ideas. Also, every teacher has a team partner at the same grade level with whom they meet weekly to coordinate their courses and plan lessons. In classrooms, teachers use cooperative learning, in pairs and small groups, and a student-centered critical thinking curriculum. All students, including LEP students, have equal access to the core curriculum and do not miss out on any areas of the regular program. Also, textbooks are available in Spanish as well as English. These elements are present in a new language arts program modeled on collaborative teaching and thematic instruction designed to provide integrated reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. The district also has started using portfolios and nongraded report cards to assess students.

Field workers who observed two schools concluded that teachers hold high expectations for their students, are very caring and devoted, and communicate well with one another. They are friendly toward the children and seem concerned about the safety of the children.

The district is involved in comprehensive outreach activities. Communications to parents are in both Spanish and English. There are partnerships with the city council, the navy, the public library, and the police and fire departments. The district works closely with the police department in programs concerned with drug problems and gangs. Schools are staffed full or part time with nurses and psychologists. Also, a family clinic, staffed by three doctors and supported by a lab and pharmacy, provides health services to families and children in the community.

District C1

This small K-8 district (3,500 students) maintained a high standard of performance throughout the decade of interest, in the face of what could have been an overwhelming transformation in the composition of its student body. In 1980, the school district, which consists of six elementary schools and a middle school, served a constituency that was 60% Anglo and 34% Hispanic. The Hispanic community was stable and had been in existence since the founding of the area's mission, which is one of the oldest operating missions in Southern California. From 1980 to 1989, the area was impacted by the migration of a number of Asian groups, many of whom came to America as refugees. The

Hispanic community also was impacted by the migration of peoples from the unstable countries of Central and South America. The net result of these new arrivals was a student body that by 1989 was 43% Hispanic, 30% Asian, and only 23% Anglo. Roughly 62% of the district's students have acquired English as a second language and about 52% of these are limited in their proficiency. Also, half of the schools in the district receive Chapter I funding.

The administrative staff consists of the superintendent, two assistant superintendents, and three special projects coordinators. These dedicated people work long hours, and are accessible to school personnel, parents, and the general community. All of the support staff in the small administration building are bilingual, and are often called upon to assist schools when they need translators. The administrators are striving to build a school staff that reflects the ethnic diversity in the community, although they are finding this slow going, particularly because of the scarcity of certified individuals from Asian backgrounds. The special projects coordinator, who has been in the district for over 30 years, has long been an advocate for a bilingual program that maintains the students' primary language skills. Wherever the district has been able to build a bilingual program, it has done so for schools that have numerous language needs. Sheltered classrooms for their non-English speakers are available. In sum, the administrators are visionaries, philosophically committed to basing policy decisions and program development on current and sensible research.

The administrators report that the support that they have received from their school board, particularly in the area of staff development, has been key to their success. The board allows the maximum number of eight pupil-free days to the staff for professional development, which over the past few years has been put to good use in the areas of second-language development and multicultural awareness. The board itself views cultural diversity as a strength, and they have accepted the challenge to build a rich and diversified community climate.

The administration and school board have been particularly successful in raising money in the community, and have recently obtained voter support to transition from an elementary district to a unified district. They also were successful in passing a bond measure to build the new high school.

Over the last 10 years, the district's Chapter I coordinator has changed the Chapter I program from a remedial program serving grades 4, 5, and 6, to an intervention program that serves kindergarten through third grade. This change, the culmination of about three years of research and evaluation, incorporated a thematic approach to learning a year before California adopted its most recent language arts framework.

Since 1985, the district has offered a two-year kindergarten experience. Entering kindergartners are screened just prior to school to identify children who are not as mature as the others, or who are not as ready for school. Parents of these children have the option of allowing the district to provide their children with the two-year kindergarten experience, to give them the time they need to "catch up."

Teachers at the schools adhere to the state frameworks, and use a wide range of educational approaches, including paired learning, cross-age and peer tutoring, and cooperative learning. The teachers observed were caring and nurturing, and held high expectations for their students. The schools do not "track" their students, except for language learning needs. Also, the schools provide students with many enrichment programs and technology resources.

The district and the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) have been working together to increase the level of participation among all of the ethnic groups in the district. Each of the schools also is trying to open up its school site council to all ethnic groups. A number of different recruitment tactics has been tried, and the process is ongoing.

The community provides a number of services, including a summer recreation program, library programs, health services and family counseling.

Low-Performance Districts

One of the districts profiled in this section maintained a low level of performance throughout the 1980-1989 time frame, in comparison to an overall gain throughout the state, and the other three districts experienced significant declines. The decline in the performance of students in Arizona district A1 was more than one standard deviation below the average decline experienced by the rest of the state. California district C4 maintained a low level of performance in comparison to the overall gain in test scores throughout the state. The remaining two California districts, C5 and C6, both recorded losses in performance more than a standard deviation below the positive state gain.

District A2

This district exhibited a large erosion in test scores while experiencing only a small increase in the Hispanic population—from 67% to 72% between 1987 and 1991. Low-income, transient families from Mexico account for much of the small increase. About one in five of these children is classified as LEP. This new immigrant group has not been welcomed by the traditional Hispanic community, which has dominated the district for many years.

With 14,000 students, the district is double the size of the smallest districts. A unified district, it consists of 12 elementary, 3 intermediate, and 2 high schools, and an alternative education center for potential dropouts. With the exception of the superintendent and bilingual coordinator, the administration is predominantly Anglo. The superintendent has been in the district 20 years, but since he was newly appointed to this position, he is regarded as an "unknown quantity." He is closely allied with the traditional Hispanic community and white power structure.

The district responded to the new immigrants by converting its Chapter I program from a pull-out to an in-class approach and introducing programs in bilingual education and reading recovery. The latter is a districtwide, multifaceted "outcomes-based" program. However, it has been greeted with mixed, often cynical reactions. No one interviewed thought it had much effect after six years.

The district confronts numerous other obstacles as well. Perhaps most basic is an intense cleavage between the traditional Hispanic community and the new arrivals. The board president and many members are well-educated Hispanics who have been in the community for many years and represent the traditional Hispanic community. Clearly, the interests of the newcomers are not represented on the board. In addition, many teachers, counselors, and administrators are resentful and overwhelmed by the demographic changes. They regard the new arrivals as threats, anticipating progressively worsening conditions in the area. The board president is openly critical of teachers, on the grounds that most are Anglos living outside the district, and the teachers harbor little hope of being supported by the administration.

Second, most of the people interviewed describe the central administration as detached and noncommunicative. Most administrators do not visit the schools, for example, although some are only 10 minutes away. Furthermore, the superintendent and central office administrators refuse to acknowledge basic problems, such as detrimental activities of gangs, and they erroneously maintain that all segments of the community are represented on the board. Some administrators are eager to assign responsibility for low student performance to factors beyond their control.

Third, the administration does not provide follow-through support for teachers who adopt district programs. On the contrary, teachers complain that the district requires them to master one reform mandate after another without guidance or direction. In-service programs have endorsed many promising approaches, but with little follow-up.

Fourth, the district was never very successful in educating traditional students with Hispanic backgrounds. Instead of maintaining the existing standards, the board seems to

have lowered them. Its most controversial action was to lower the grade requirement for extracurricular activities from C to D.

Finally, the district operates a school for the brighter students. However, the school does not include special education or programs for minority language students. Some members of the community believe that, in effect, it segregates the students.

The district has a number of commendable features. It operates an outstanding elementary school counseling program and a strong bilingual program. The Chapter I program was changed four years ago from a pull-out to an in-class approach to language instruction. Moreover, many aspects of the two elementary schools visited are noteworthy. The field workers described them as warm and caring schools, with close contact among teachers, students, and the principals. The principals are very competent and dedicated. Full-day instructional aids are available. Teacher morale is high. There are several special programs. Special education services are provided in classrooms, rather than on a pull-out basis. A large number of the classes at the elementary level offers bilingual instruction. In classrooms, teachers group students heterogeneously, make concerted efforts to mix students who receive bilingual instruction and those who do not during the regular school day, and provide peer tutoring. A variety of assessments are used.

Nevertheless, without support from the top, many schools in the district seem to be floundering. The district keeps trying to implement new approaches without supporting the existing ones. And, neither the board nor the administration is committed to addressing the fundamental issues in the district.

District C6

This district had the largest decline in test scores between 1984 and 1989. There was a 10% increase in Hispanic enrollment, bringing the total to 90%. Asians increased 3% and now make up 12% of the district. Also, there was a large increase in the number of LEP students over the same period. It is a medium-size district (9,000 students) with 9 elementary schools, 2 intermediate schools, and a middle school. About 30% of the students are on AFDC and about 90% receive free or reduced-price lunch. Numerous programs are available, targeted to specific student problems. There is a tradition of community involvement in the schools, including some programs designed to increase parent participation, provide psychological services, and coordinate health services with local agencies.

Reportedly, there also is general support in the community for multiculturalism. Public communications are in both English and Spanish. In the elementary schools, an

exemplary bilingual program operates in all subject areas except social studies. Half the teachers in the district are bilingual. They are well-trained and assisted by many bilingual aides. At least until the intermediate grades, there is tolerance and encouragement for students to use their primary language. In grades 1-3, many classes are conducted primarily in Spanish; students are transferred into sheltered or traditional classes in the fourth grade. Pull-out programs are used only for Asian students.

The teachers and administrators were described as generally caring individuals concerned about their students doing well in school. There are many clues to suggest the schools have high standards and high expectations of the students. Also, teachers use flexible grouping and other innovative teaching methods.

However, a closer reading of the situation reveals some critical flaws in the system. In particular, the district does not provide many incentives for teachers either to increase their knowledge and pedagogical skills, or to work together. Reportedly, they do not collaborate or communicate with one another. Also, many teachers do not receive training in multicultural awareness.

In the classrooms, there is some tracking by ability. Cross-age teaching, peer tutoring, and similar methods are employed infrequently. Portfolios, open-ended questions, problem solving, and other alternative student assessments are seldom used. And, notwithstanding the tradition of community involvement, relatively few parents are on the key committees.

Perhaps the fundamental problems stem from tensions in the community power structure. Although the community is over 70% Hispanic, both the city council and the school board are comprised predominantly of Anglos. Moreover, the board president does not support the superintendent's program, and generally, the board and administration do not work well together. The teacher union, whose members are primarily Anglo, supports the Anglo board. The principals who were interviewed believe the board has the upper hand, and the superintendent complains that board members unnecessarily become involved in management details.

While such political tensions do not necessarily result in lower test scores, it is plausible that the conflict has sapped some the district's commitment to solve its problems, and that energy that otherwise might have been devoted to meeting the challenges posed by new English learners has been squandered on in-fighting. While the district has had an exemplary bilingual program in place for some time, in contrast to the extraordinary efforts made in the improved districts, this one has not taken additional steps to meet the new burdens. The superintendent is not firmly in control, and the board has not given the

superintendent a mandate to reform the system to help language minorities and other educationally disadvantaged children.

District C5

The antithesis of the ideal high performer is embodied in this sprawling 75,000 student, K-12 district with 60 elementary schools and 21 middle or high schools. As student enrollment jumped 44%, from 42,000 during the 1980s, there was a dramatic 26% increase in LEP students. Today, 30% of the students are LEP. Nearly half the students are on AFDC. The county, which ranks high in the state on measures of poverty and welfare recipients, grew 23% during the past decade, while persons on public assistance increased 69%. The proportion of Hispanic students in the district has hovered around one third for the past decade, Asians increased from only 3% to 21%, while Anglos declined from 53% to 31% over the period. One in 10 students is African American. The community, and the district schools, are highly segregated.

The seven-member board includes two Hispanics and one African American. However, notwithstanding this minority representation, the community appears to have developed an assimilationist mentality, denying any need to "cater" to non-Anglo students. Several factors contribute to this attitude. One is that middle- and upper-class Anglos dominate school councils and other decisionmaking bodies. Perhaps another is that there are only four Hispanics and two African Americans among the 40 administrators. In addition, some outspoken citizens associate an increase in the crime rate with the influx of minorities, which has contributed to feelings of mutual distrust among the subcultures. Suspensions and expulsions have increased. Ultimately, some people have concluded, large segments of the district have lost confidence in the public school system.

The board president is optimistic and informed about language development issues, but acknowledges that there has been little change in the curriculum or programs for at least 10 years and seems perplexed about how to handle the demographic changes. In her view, the superintendent is more administrator and implementor of board policies than leader. The board's job, she believes, is to direct the superintendent on how to manage change. However, in fact the board spends most of its time on budgeting and fiscal responsibilities, not overseeing change. There has been a high turnover among superintendents in recent years. The current superintendent, a middle-age white male, has been in the position only six months. Two assistant superintendents, white females, also are new to the district. One administrator, an assistant superintendent who is an African American woman, has

been in the district for decades. All are dedicated professionals and seem concerned about LEP students, but not to the extent of acting as advocates for them.

As one of the largest, fastest growing school districts in the state, the bureaucracy has become large and complicated. In response, the district has moved toward decentralization in the form of site-based management. Each school has wide latitude to allocate funds and launch programs as seems appropriate. While decentralization has given schools more flexibility, it also has allowed the district to duck the responsibility for systemwide reforms needed to cope with the changing demographics. Rather than promulgating policies and programs that might help new students, the district relies on the goodwill, imagination, and dedication of 81 different principals and assorted members of their school councils. Consequently, two schools visited seemed to be doing things that will help disadvantaged students. But, in many schools, it seems that little attention is being given to meeting their needs.

The teachers are regarded as dedicated and competent. In several of the classrooms observed, students were engaged in cognitively demanding tasks, and teachers were using gestures and nonverbal cues to communicate with non-English-speaking students. Some were using cooperative grouping, buddy systems, and multimedia. However, as a group, the teaching corps is relatively old. They were never trained or otherwise prepared for the burst of cultural diversity and LEP students whom they now find in their classrooms. They expressed frustration and readily confided the difficulties they are having in coping with the diverse needs of their students.

Although the attributes already described do not seem conducive to a favorable learning environment, there are some bright spots. The district has established a newcomer school that provides intensive ESL instruction for 600 students, and some schools have bilingual aides. A high school principal maintains that the teachers have high expectations for their students. The school is seeking to meet the new demands. That principal has made it a priority to hire bilingual teachers. One third of the elementary school staff is minority, and many are either bilingual or have language development specialist certificates. Spanish is freely spoken in this school.

However, in general, teachers feel that the district has never supported bilingual education to the extent it could become a viable alternative for students. At the elementary level, LEP students are pulled out of their regular classrooms every day for ESL instruction lasting 30-45 minutes. The ratio of native-language speaking aides is so unfavorable that students receive little native language support. There are few bilingual materials in the district, no funds for them, and no advocates demanding them. Multicultural awareness is not emphasized in teacher in-service programs, and many teachers have participated in no

more than one in-service session on LEP strategies. The district does not provide bilingual classes even in schools with high concentrations of Spanish students, for whom bilingual teachers are presumably available. Consequently, teachers of culturally diverse students typically continue to teach as though all students were middle-class Anglos. Moreover, although the number of teachers increased 60% during the 1980s, minorities increased only 4%. Currently five out of six teachers are Anglo, and the district continues to hire Anglos at this rate.

Therefore, although some administrators and teachers profess to believe in the importance of cultivating native languages to facilitate learning English, the programs in place for most students indicate that the district's fundamental strategy is to concentrate on teaching English without laying a foundation in the native language.

District C4

The student performance in this district appears to have stagnated since 1984. It is located in the southeast region of a large urban area, which was originally farmland. Today, it is a sprawling urban area with many of the problems associated with the inner city. The district itself is approximately 15 square miles, bordered by four major freeways. Historically, the population was a mixture of white and Hispanic residents. In the past 10 to 15 years, it has diversified to include large numbers of Vietnamese and Cambodian speakers, as well as Tagalog, Cantonese, and Laotion speakers. The largest minority population is still Hispanic, outnumbering by almost two to one the Vietnamese, who are the second largest ethnic group. The district has the lowest income and highest diversity district in its county. Twenty-five families with children attending school in the district were living out of their cars. The district is 90% minority. Fifty-five percent of the 90 are Hispanic.

The district is moderately sized with 11 elementary schools and 2 middle schools. Nine of the schools are on a year-round schedule. The student population has changed dramatically over the past 10 years. The number of limited English proficient students has almost tripled, and at present is about 41%. Spanish-speaking students remain the majority, at about 46% of the total student body. The Vietnamese are the second largest group at 14%, and students who speak Cantonese, Tagalog, Laotian, and Korean make up the remaining 14% of the Asian student population.

Of the 12 district administrators, all but three are Caucasian. The superintendent is a white female who has been in her position for 10 years. She is, along with the board of education, the principal decisionmaker in the district. She is both very much liked and disliked in the district. Some speak highly of her and heartily support her; others do not

agree with her politics. The consensus is that she is an astute and capable administrator. The reservations about her have much to do with her priorities. In the opinions of some, the superintendent focused on things like technology and high-tech innovations while allowing much needed programs and services for disadvantaged and/or minority children to go by the wayside because of "lack of funding."

The board of education has five members. Two are white, two Japanese, and one African American. It is interesting to note that in a predominantly Hispanic district, there are no Hispanic members.

The superintendent and the school board have been highly criticized for building a $7.4 million district service center. The complex provides integrated services for students, parents, and staff. As one of the first comprehensive service centers in the state, the new complex called the "pink palace" by some of its opponents, offers child care, help on probation related concerns, counseling in Chinese, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Laotian, and Mien, a free health clinic to students and their families, parks and recreation office, truancy court, and a PTA office. The complex also houses all district offices, including personnel, curriculum, special education, business, and language development. There is also a large auditorium where school board meetings are held. The construction of this complex has divided the district into two factions—one that supports the superintendent and the decision to build the service center and the other that opposes the cost of the center and in general the superintendent's politics.

A great amount of hostility among some of the teachers regarding both site administration and the district administration occurred at one school. Some teachers complained that they were expected to do miracles despite very difficult teaching circumstances (e.g., overcrowded classrooms, large numbers of LEP students, meager resources). They further commented that the district was cutting funding to schools and teachers' salaries, while spending large amounts of money to build the controversial district office and service center. Teachers at this particular school were not happy. One teacher reported that she had been discouraged by the district from speaking Spanish to her students.

However, the administration is well-versed in language minority issues and uses all the current jargon regarding language development and native language support. Even so, the programs in place did not reflect their level of sophistication. The programs resemble those in place 15 to 20 years ago, when issues of both non-LEP and LEP students were first being addressed. As one classroom teacher put it, "I feel like we have gone back in time. There has been no change really. In fact I think the situation these kids are in is worse now than it was several years ago."

While the overall tenor of the district does not discourage use of native language, it also does not put great emphasis on supporting native language in the schools. Rather, the main thrust of the district is technology. A large portion of available funds is used to implement, update, and expand the technology at school sites.

Table 3 summarizes the community and organizational characteristics of the eight districts described in this section.

Table 3
Community, Organizational, and Teacher/Program Characteristics of the Eight Districts

	California districts						Arizona districts	
Characteristics	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	A1	A2
Community characteristics								
• Only one or two non-English-speaking groups have settled in district	No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
• No observed or reported differences among district neighborhoods	Yes		Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
• No "tensions" reported (e.g., gangs, drugs, parental drug abuse)	No	No	No		No	No	No	No
• District not being distracted by financial/policy issue requiring board/administration attention	No			No				
• "Relatively" small district (≤ 10 elementary and middle schools)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
Organizational characteristics								
• "Fair" representation of *new* immigrants on school board	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
• Board, administration working well together/supported by teachers	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No		No
• Present (1992) superintendent appointed to position sometime during the 1980-89 time frame	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
• Administration works long hours/visits schools/accessible to teachers	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
• District recognizes needs of newcomers and has implemented programs (bilingual and ESL) to provide language support	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No

table continues

Characteristics	California districts						Arizona districts	
	C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	A1	A2
• District staff composition reflects ethnic composition in students	No	No	No	No	No	No		No
• District priority to hire more minorities	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No
• At schools visited, principals: Dedicated/high expectations for students/work well with teachers	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	
Teacher/program characteristics								
• No evidence of teacher dissatisfaction with district governance/policies	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
• Evidence of district response to national standards/California frameworks	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
• Priority given to programs that meet the needs of language minority students in the district (bilingual and ESL in the case of multidiverse students)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
• District has strong priority for teachers to shelter instruction for language minority students and/or to hire bilingual staff	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
• High parental involvement among language minority groups	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
• Community/district support to provide parents from new immigrant groups with health care/parenting skills/drug education or to teach them how to support these children's education	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	

PART IV: THE HIGH-PERFORMANCE DISTRICT IN PROFILE

In this section, we propose an ideal district. It is drawn from liberal and speculative interpretations of information pertaining to the eight cases summarized. The discrete elements of the model are less important than the patterns.

District and School Organization

The high-performance district has a distinctive pattern of organization composed of attributes from: *the school board, the superintendent and other administrative officers, the structure of authority and incentives, and school programs and support facilities.*

Attributes of the School Board

A school board is pivotal to the change process in that it buffers changes in the community—either by ignoring them or by forcefully addressing them. The exact role of the board depends on its composition, which may or may not reflect recent demographic changes in the community. School board attributes can be divided into three dimensions: *composition*, *goals*, and *supportive behavior* of the members.

Composition

School board members in the high-performance district include an ethnic and social class mix representative of the community, including groups that have recently arrived in a district. Anglos on the board do not represent a special constituency opposed to change, and they customarily work together harmoniously with minorities.

Turnover in board membership reflects basic changes in a community ready for change. It is an important key to the speed and effectiveness with which a district accommodates new arrivals. Admittedly, some long-time board members adapt to new circumstances, but as a general rule, long-time residents do not represent new groups very well, and hence turnover creates new leadership opportunities.

Goals

Board members do not see new minorities as threats, nor worry about losing control of the district. Not only do they recognize the need to accommodate recent arrivals, they have

given the superintendent a mandate to change the district to accommodate newcomers, and there is consensus on this goal. While they may disagree among themselves, there are no permanent cleavages.

Supportive Behavior

Board members in the high-performance district support the superintendent in most decisions. They are actively involved in the district and frequently visit the schools, are acquainted with the principals, and know the names of some teachers.

Patterns

Again, we stress the importance of the patterns in the above profile. For example, given that a board may vocally support a superintendent who is not committed to change, obviously support for change, not blind allegiance to a superintendent, is what is important. Similarly, absence of cleavages will lead to improved schools only if the board is committed to accommodate new populations of students. On the other hand, a board can be paralyzed by one or two members who are determined to oppose changes supported by the majority.

When a board member visits with teachers and students, that person often gains insights and information. Perhaps as important, such visits can crystallize a person's abstract commitment to the education of educationally disadvantaged students. Ultimately, perhaps visiting schools is simply something that deeply concerned board members want to do.

Attributes of the Superintendent

It has been observed that in a growing number of American school districts, superintendents are increasingly initiating fundamental school reforms (David, 1989; Hill & Bonan, 1991; Hallinger & Edwards, 1992). Accordingly, appointing the superintendent is probably the single most important decision a school board makes.

However, the superintendent should be looked upon as an instrument, an extension of the board's will, rather than an independent force. The effective schools literature gives high priority to that vague and illusive quality everyone calls "leadership." However, the superintendent's actions and ability to lead are inseparable from the school board's mandate. On the one hand, a board that wants something to happen looks for someone

who is equally committed and prepared to make it happen. On the other hand, that person relies on the board to support new initiatives.

The attributes of superintendents in successful districts fall into three categories: *personal attributes and behavior, personal priorities*, and *interpersonal relationships*.

Personal Attributes and Behavior

At least three personal attributes seem salient in superintendents who manage successful districts; namely, they:

- are visionary and willing to take some risks;
- are widely regarded as competent and informed; and
- work long hours.

A note on ethnicity. It is conceivable that a minority background will help a superintendent understand the needs of disadvantaged students. However, background does not seem to be a necessary ingredient for a superintendent of the high-performance district. One improved district, a predominantly Hispanic community, has a Hispanic superintendent who has lived in the area all of his life. However, the previous superintendent, an Anglo woman, was equally committed to the same objectives. Moreover, in one community, a superintendent of Hispanic background was so closely tied to the traditional Hispanic power structure that he ignored newly arrived Hispanic groups. In still another instance, the efforts of a Hispanic superintendent were blocked by an Anglo board. Of course, a superintendent must thoroughly understand the community and the minorities represented. Having lived in the area a long time may facilitate such an understanding. But ethnic background is not the crucial consideration.

Personal priorities. A superintendent's personal priorities are more important than her or his personal traits. Priorities can be divided into two components—*a commitment to meet the challenge of cultural diversity*, and *follow-through*.

Commitment to cultural diversity. This commitment is reflected a number of ways. Of special importance, the ideal superintendent acknowledges cultural and language problems in the district and that they must be aggressively addressed. He or she does not ignore or deny such problems, or gloss them over to preserve a public relations image. Moreover, cultural diversity within the community is viewed as a strength and an enriching experience, rather than a threatening invasion. Moreover, achieving equity and helping disadvantaged students placed at risk are guiding principles.

The importance of the top executive's commitment to the goals of improving education for educationally disadvantaged children, and finding the necessary means to do so, cannot be overemphasized. In some districts, the attention of well-meaning administrators has been diverted by controversial, expensive, or time-consuming building programs or efforts to install instructional technologies.

Follow-through. The second component of the priority attribute is pragmatic. The superintendent is firm minded and *determined to actually implement instructional programs*. This propensity to follow through goes well beyond merely endorsing and legitimating cultural norms, which some authors choose to emphasize (e.g., Coleman & LaRocque, 1988). It involves mobilizing the power and authority associated with the office. He or she works aggressively to find the means to achieve the priorities. Without this component, priorities amount to little more than good intentions and ceremonial lip service.

For example, a superintendent who is committed to bilingual education gives high priority to hiring bilingual teachers and finding resources to pay extra for that skill. He or she not only stresses that students must learn English, but provides programs to help them. Generally, the superintendent seeks out funds and finds creative ways to reallocate available resources within the budget to meet instructional priorities (as opposed to lamenting the lack of money for instructional programs).

Interpersonal Relationships

The third dimension of an effective superintendent is intense involvement in a wide web of relationships within the district and community at large, as well with state and federal agencies. This dimension has these components: accessibility, collaboration, participation, and cosmopolitan ties.

Accessibility. The first quality, accessibility, means that he or she is not sheltered behind layers of assistants, secretaries, and appointment calendars. Physically, it means the door is usually open to parents and others, or open at publicized times. In addition, the superintendent is visible in the schools and an active participant in the community.

Collaboration. The superintendent works closely with individual school board members in between formal meetings and with other members of the administrative staff. She or he also collaborates with a variety of community leaders on projects relating to the school.

Participation. The participation attribute stands in sharp contrast to the frequent practice of delegating responsibilities and forgetting about them until problems arise. The

superintendent, working long hours if necessary, takes an active role in critical administrative decisions—selection of key personnel perhaps being the most important. Superintendents of high-performance districts hand pick their principals and even interview many of the new teachers. In addition, they may interview other teachers at important career stages, such as tenure.

Cosmopolitan ties. Finally, the superintendent of a high-performance district associates with influential community groups, promotes outreach programs for parents, and concentrates on obtaining outside funds to support programs. There are close relationships with all major segments of the community, including newly arrived groups, as opposed to parochial connections with one dominant sector. Moreover, he or she is able to find sources of support and funding, both within the community (e.g., businesses, social agencies, colleges), and externally at the state and federal levels. Accordingly, the superintendent often travels.

Again, however, none of these things counts unless the superintendent and key staff members are dedicated to the key priority of helping educationally disadvantaged children.

The Superintendent's Role and District Size

The critical importance of district size is apparent in some of these attributes. For example, it is nearly impossible for a superintendent of a large district to interview all new teachers. Nevertheless, the more basic principle is that the chief administrator should not lose track of critically important delegated functions. In a large district, the superintendent can review qualifications of newly appointed teachers, interview some of them at random, talk regularly with the personnel director, and take an active role in appointing and briefing principals. Also, in a large district, accessibility can be increased through formal arrangements, such as biannual neighborhood meetings or open sessions before or after school board meetings.

Attributes of Other Administrators

While the superintendent is the key player, other members of the administrative staff must provide the necessary support and backup. On the one hand, they are in a position to sabotage new initiatives and programs they do not approve. On the other hand, when the superintendent has some deficiencies, they can help compensate. Their attributes have the same dimensions already described for the superintendent, namely, *personal attributes and behavior*, *personal priorities*, and *interpersonal relationships*. Rather than

repeating the observations already made, this discussion is confined to some supplementary observations about *emulation, advocacy,* and *communication.*

Emulation

The superintendent's behavior provides a model that at least some other administrators may choose to emulate. For example, in high-performance districts, some staff members work protracted hours alongside the superintendent. Also, they generally respect and support the superintendent, and are not openly critical, or maneuvering to undercut the district's objectives and programs.

Advocacy

Because superintendents of high-performance districts take an active role in selecting personnel, it would be surprising if at least some key staff members did not share the superintendent's priorities. However, even in districts where the superintendent is not actively working to provide good bilingual programs, for example, a staff member might act as a strong advocate for educationally disadvantaged children and thus make an important difference.

Communication

A mark of the high-performance district is that most administrators work as a team, meaning that they communicate frequently, are aware of each other's activities, and share information and assignments.

Administrative Structure

The priorities of school boards and administrators would amount to little more than inconsequential rhetoric unless they become operationalized in a structure of authority and incentives. Such a structure is composed of the following elements: *centralized authority, an even balance between autonomy and control, supportive staffing patterns,* and *principals who are dedicated to the district's priorities.*

Centralized Authority

The superintendent and board retain control of the high-performance district. This is important because they command powerful incentives and strategic resources needed to

support district priorities. On the other hand, decentralized districts, where it is the responsibility of each school to find its own solutions, can flounder because the achievements of some schools are frequently undercut by the failures of others.

Balance Between Autonomy and Control

While schools in the high-performance district enjoy substantial autonomy, as just stated, discretion is granted conditionally and available only to the extent it is used consistently with district priorities and likely to contribute to the goal of serving educationally disadvantaged children. Freedom is restricted by the clear expectation that a principal or a teacher does not have the option of neglecting the district's priorities. What is being described is fundamentally different from the premise of much site-based management, which permits each principal and teacher to decide for themselves what should be done.

Centralized control is maintained largely by carefully *selecting personnel* and providing them with *incentives*.

Personnel selection. The superintendent hand picks principals and teachers who are committed to the right goals, and then closely monitors their progress toward meeting the priorities. As already mentioned, hiring is one of the superintendent's highest priorities. She or he finds time to interview all principals and many new teachers, and in any case, reviews and approves their credentials.

Incentives. However, notwithstanding the significance of personnel, it is important to understand their behavior as an extension of district priorities and personnel policies, rather than the fortuitous gathering of some good people in one place. Accordingly, the district provides incentives, in the form of praise, recognition, and even bonuses, to encourage and coerce principals to follow district priorities. Staff may be rewarded for working with the community, taking creative approaches to instruction, meeting the needs of educationally disadvantaged children, good attendance records (in the case of teachers), and the like. However, everyone is encouraged to take the initiative to find better ways to meet the priorities.

Staffing Patterns

High-performance districts have a lean administrative staff. This pattern reflects, in part, the small size of such districts. However, it also is a consequence of the priorities already mentioned. The most improved district in the study, for example, was able to pay its teachers well, in part, because the administrative staff was not allowed to grow as fast as many other comparable districts in the state.

Also, turnover among principals and teachers provides flexibility and opportunities to recruit people who are dedicated to the district's priorities.

Principals' Priorities

In the high-performance district, principals give top priority to hiring teachers who are bilingual and otherwise demonstrate an unwavering commitment to multilingual education. They are intensely involved in the daily affairs of their school, spending most of their time in the hallways, playgrounds, and classrooms. Consequently, they are familiar with what various teachers are doing in their classes at any particular time. In addition, they are given recognition for devoting time to working with members of the community and providing programs for parents.

Educational Programs

School programs are logical outcomes of all that has gone before—extensions of the district's priorities and incentives, and reflections of the way it allocates resources. They characteristically include: *innovation, a multicultural focus, high standards,* and *flexible organizational designs*.

Innovation

In contrast to the low-performance district, which has not experienced curriculum change for a decade, schools in the high-performance district are continually trying out new things and communicating via centers, new activities, and workshops. However, the district tempers the experimentation with commitments to follow through on the things it starts, resisting the temptation to replace new programs with still others before their outcomes have been assessed.

Multicultural Focus

Schools in the high-performance district have a multicultural component and active, comprehensive second-language programs. Students are encouraged to use their native language. There are sufficient native language materials. Most schools offer sheltered content classes to small language groups, and use strict criteria for transferring students into English classes.

The district also makes a collective effort to recruit bilingual and minority teachers, and consequently a relatively high percentage of the teaching staff is minority and bilingual.

Programs that are supported by Chapter I funds are not created primarily to satisfy state requirements nor are they marginal to the school day (as is true of pull-out programs, for example). Such programs are supported with follow-through staff development, guidance and resources, and time for teachers to learn and plan.

High Standards

High-performance districts: (a) hold high expectations that all children can learn; (b) provide a common program with clear instructional goals; (c) link goals with curriculum; and (d) focus on outcomes and authentic assessment.

Flexible Organizational Designs

Teachers have access to organizational structures that give them teaching options, including: flexible grouping methods, team teaching, cooperative learning, and equal opportunities for students to participate in a core curriculum. On the other hand, tracking and ability grouping are not used.

Teachers

Good teachers are obviously keys to the high-performance district. They are widely regarded as *competent*, treated as *professionals*, and provided with *in-service programs* designed to keep them up-to-date.

Competence

The high-performance district makes it a priority to select competent, dedicated teachers. They have a reputation for being well-qualified, and are not tied to curriculum guides and other requirements. They work long hours and visit parents regularly.

In the classroom, teachers use sound and creative instructional strategies, which:

- encourage active student participation;
- rely heavily on a literature-based language arts program;
- focus on meaning, make use of manipulatives, and teach basic and advanced skills through meaningful tasks; and

- are designed to validate multicultural values and practices and make connections with students' experience and cultures.

Also, structures are in place that allow teachers to use classrooms and student groupings in flexible, creative ways, such as mixed-age grouping, cross-age tutoring, and variable-size classes.

Professionalism

Teachers generally report being satisfied with their professional autonomy and their principals' support. They are encouraged to collaborate and are included in the decision process. High priority is given to collaborative approaches, such as team teaching and grade-level or subject-matter articulation. Site-based management and other restructuring strategies might be used, but with the understanding that discretion always is contingent on districtwide constraints governing the goals.

In-Service Training

However, a teacher's personal competence and professional autonomy are insufficient without encouragement to welcome cultural diversity and unless training is provided to deal with it. High-performance districts provide many opportunities for staff development. Many classes give attention to forms of cultural diversity, including language differences.

Community Relations

In the high-performance district, board members, administrators, and teachers *respect* the cultural integrity of the diverse households and do not presume to impose assimilationist pressures on children or adults. The district has a dense network of relationships with groups in the community and active outreach programs. Two important dimensions are extensive opportunities for *family involvement* and *community programs* for students' families.

Family Involvement

In the high-performance district, parents are treated by professional staff as partners in the education process. Parents or other family members who have sufficient time and energy are recruited enthusiastically into school programs as volunteers and participants. For example, they may help teachers in the classroom or on the playground, or they may act as

street crossing guards, or work in the office. More significant, they serve on advisory committees to schools and the district.

Community Programs

Family members who cannot respond in this way by virtue of poverty or poor health often are supported through school programs designed to assist the children, in combination with support for parents. For example, schools provide workshops for parents to help them understand the school's programs, expectations, and goals. Also, forums are provided for citizens to express their views to district administrators and the school board.

Support Services

High-performing districts deliver more high quality and better coordinated social, health and psychological services than other districts. They also have strong ties to other agencies in the community and to parents. While money is a factor, what matters most is that the district sets aside resources for facilities dedicated to the problems of new members of the community. In particular, the district establishes some type of *welcoming center* and *collaborates with social agencies* in the community.

Welcoming Center

The high-performance district has a center, or similar facility, whose sole or primary purpose is to diagnose the needs of new students, counseling them and their families, and encouraging parent participation. The facility operates active outreach programs designed to help parents develop language skills and learn how to help their children with homework. It also provides referral services to those students and parents who require a wide range of social services.

Collaboration With Social Agencies

High-performing districts therefore maintain close working relationships with social workers, police, health agencies, and other service providers. They operate a comprehensive health program and collaborate with local health services. Health clinics are staffed by bilingual personnel, and translators are provided at meetings as needed.

PART V: THE COMMUNITY CONTEXT

A school district's capacity to approximate the ideal type depends on its social and cultural environment. Communities not only generate problems for school districts, but also set limits on what they can and cannot do. It is therefore necessary to take into account community contexts. The cases provide some information about two types of contexts: *the history and culture of the community*, and *district size and composition*.

History and Culture of the Community

The high-performance district is located in a community where people tend to be sensitive to the needs of new minorities and ready to help them. Decisionmakers choose to strengthen their power base by reaching out to new constituents rather than shunning them. In allocating resources, they do not exclude those segments of the community who do not dominate politically and economically.

Two dimensions of a community that are critically important are *repercussions from immigration* and the *core structure*.

Repercussions From Immigration

The repercussions that a community feels from immigration will depend on the number and/or distinctiveness of cultural groups entering a community within a relatively short time span. Repercussion can be measured in terms of the magnitude and rate of change, the number of languages represented, and the socioeconomic level of the immigrants.

Relative Magnitude of Change

Change in demographics is one key to how hard a district may try to help newcomers. One outstanding district, which improved slightly while counterparts in the state declined dramatically, underwent a virtual reversal in low-income minority enrollments over a decade. In another improved district, the Asian community increased dramatically. In both cases, there was a substantial increase in the numbers of LEP students. Perhaps it sometimes takes an exceptional impact to jolt a community into undertaking the extraordinary measures required to meet the challenges of helping new English learners.

Rate of Change

Gradual change is probably easier for a community to cope with than a sudden impact. On the other hand, as already noted, a sudden influx of new residents can provoke an otherwise lethargic community to take steps to assist them. Perhaps both features are present in the ideal case. That is, at first there are gradual influxes of new language groups, low income minorities, or other educationally disadvantaged children, followed by a burst of immigration. One high-performance district has housed several ethnic and language minority subcommunities for generations, and consequently it has benefited from decades of practice when faced with the prospect of accommodating extensive demographic changes during the past decade.

In any case, it appears that long periods of Anglo dominance can desensitize communities to the needs of new types of educationally disadvantaged children. After many years, there is a threshold, after which a community tends to become complacent, blinding it to the fact that limited English proficiency is a whole new dimension requiring special, extraordinary measures. Several districts whose test scores eroded over the decade seem to fit that pattern.

Number of Language Groups

The challenge increases as the number of languages present in a community increases. There is only one large language group in one high-performance district, which has been present since the mid 1970s. However, because an improved district hosted 18 language groups (many of them very recent arrivals who speak no English), the number of language groups is not decisive.

Socioeconomic Level

The level of poverty and educational backgrounds of the newcomers obviously also is important. In the Southwest, communities now hosting new immigrants from impoverished areas of rural Mexico and war-torn countries of Central America face overwhelming challenges.

Core Structure

The core structure is reflected in the degree of *segregation* in residential living patterns and in *the civic culture*.

Residential Segregation

Patterns of social integration reflect, if not predetermine, how a community is likely to respond to newcomers. In the high-performance district, although minorities cluster together, they also are dispersed throughout different parts of the community. In the low-performance district, they are residentially sequestered into separate rigidly bounded neighborhoods.

The Civic Culture

In the ideal, high-performance district, there are few serious tensions among racial/ethnic groups. Parent committees are active and not dominated by Anglos. In particular, the district's attention is not riveted to divisive financial or political issues that deflect attention from the needs created by population changes.

District Size and Growth

The high-performance district is relatively small (e.g., under 10,000 students), although some low performers are small as well. While neither size nor growth in itself predetermines organizational performance, both variables interact powerfully with other key variables, including: *the economies of scale, conflict and coordination*, and *socioeconomic status of the students*.

Economies of Scale

As a rule, both size and growth produce economies that maximize the available resources. For that reason, large districts often have the capacity to deliver more educational services than small ones. However, none of the districts studied received more than negligible increases in financial resources over the period, even though they experienced extreme changes in enrollments and program impacts of enormous magnitude. Furthermore, no

association was found for these districts between the increased funding from federal programs and achievement gains.

Conflict and Coordination

Economies of scale tend to be offset by coordination and control problems characteristic of very large districts. In big districts, responsibility for outcomes often becomes fragmented and obscured behind long hierarchies of specialists. In addition, they tend to be vulnerable to severe inequalities in the distribution of resources among schools and programs. Consequently, small districts are more likely to meet the high-performance ideal standards than are large ones.

Socioeconomic Status

A study of California school districts (Friedkin & Necochea, 1988) found that large districts with high-status students generate instructional and related service benefits, while those with low-status students do worse than smaller districts[5]. Consequently, for educationally disadvantaged children, small districts are better candidates for the high-performance districts than large ones.

A Qualification

Nevertheless, the problems associated with scale are not necessarily inevitable. In principle, big districts can overcome many of their problems by implementing other corrective measures. For example, resources can be distributed more equitably without downsizing. Top administrators can establish hiring guidelines and review hiring decisions, provide extra incentives for achieving district goals, and reserve time for public meetings. In addition, big districts can form oversight citizens committees. Perhaps these and other compensating strategies cannot totally overcome the loss of control associated with scale, but they will help.

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[5] For the districts in this study, the term "small" means under 10,000 students.

PART VI: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Drawing on information from eight school districts in the Western region, we have proposed a set of optimal characteristics and approaches, which districts seeking to improve the fate of educationally disadvantaged children can use for guidance. The resulting profile (see Table 4 at the end of this section) defines a hypothetical, ideal school district, which we have referred to as the *high-performance district*. The ideal type is a composite of selected features present in a few districts that seem to be meeting the challenges of social diversity with relative success. There is no one overriding feature. What is important is the pattern, a constellation of crucial attributes operating in concert. When all factors identified converge, a district seems to have more success in improving test scores than when the opposite conditions prevail.

The 8 districts profiled here were purposively selected from districts in the Western region that, according to a variety of indicators, experienced extreme demographic changes between 1980 and 1989. They were selected from 11 cases in the original study based on magnitude of improvement or deterioration in their test scores between 1984 and 1989. They were visited for approximately five days by a research team. The districts cannot be regarded as representative of comparable districts in the region, and therefore, they do not provide a reliable basis for making generalizations. However, given the similarities in their demographics and the magnitude of differences in their test scores, they can be treated as comparative cases for the purpose of identifying conditions that may be beneficial to educationally disadvantaged children.

The ideal type will be summarized in the following paragraphs.

District and School Organization

The high-performance district is defined by the features of its school board, administrators, and the administrative structure.

Attributes of the School Board

Ethnic and language minority immigrants who have recently arrived are represented on the school board, and the veteran Anglo board members do not unite against them. Many board members visit schools to familiarize themselves with the problems, and most believe that the superintendent must be empowered to change the district's programs to provide more effective education for newcomers and generally back those initiatives.

Attributes of the Superintendent

The high-performance district's superintendent regards cultural diversity as a strength and makes serving disadvantaged children and youth a high priority, often best accomplished through good language instruction. The superintendent becomes personally involved in the selection of principals, assistant principals, and bilingual teachers and is involved in a wide network of organizations and peers. In addition, she or he is successful in obtaining outside funds from state, federal, and other sources. These commitments are more important than the superintendent's gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic background.

Attributes of Other Administrators

High-performance districts maintain small administrative staffs, investing their resources instead in high pay, benefits, training opportunities, and support for teachers. Professional staff members are singularly dedicated to very high levels of individual and team involvement with other groups in the community and to long hours of extra effort within their school sites. Administrators work as a team and model their actions around the superintendent's priorities and behavior, and they act as strong advocates for educationally disadvantaged children in the district.

Administrative Structure

In the ideal district, it is important that the superintendent and school board retain control of key decisions because they can command the powerful incentives and strategic resources needed to fulfill commitments. While schools enjoy substantial autonomy, their discretion is contingent on meeting the goal of serving educationally disadvantaged children. Control is maintained largely by provision of incentives and careful selection of personnel, including the principals and teachers.

The district's performance is strongly associated with the quality of leadership exerted by school principals. They are given the autonomy needed to do outstanding work, provided they are working to meet the district's commitments to educationally disadvantaged children. They give top priority to programs for language minorities and hiring multilingual teachers, and they are intensely involved with teachers, parents, community volunteers, and colleagues at district headquarters, and dedicated to the strengthening of their programs. They also interact frequently with the central administration. Site-based management may or may not be the rhetoric used within the high-performing districts, and there are important variations in programs from school to

school, but administrators and teachers in the successful districts share a common concern for disadvantaged learners.

Educational Programs

Schools in high-performance districts continually search for new, more effective approaches and provide flexible organizational designs, which give teachers more options to deliver effective instruction (e.g., flexible grouping methods). Programs are based on the assumption that all students can learn through a common program with clear instructional goals. The critical element is a programmatic emphasis on student language development, in particular on multilanguage instruction. However, the particular programs in a district are less important than the quality of implementation and the cooperative integration among the programs. The high-performing district uses its discretionary funds to supplement and enrich the core curriculum, which is itself designed to benefit disadvantaged learners. It is adverse to pulling slow learners or students placed at risk out of their regular classes for brief periods of special enrichment or tutoring and remediation.

Teachers

The high-performance district gives high priority to recruiting good teachers, especially bilingual teachers. It also provides incentives to encourage teachers to welcome cultural and language minorities, and it provides them with the necessary training to deal effectively with such students. Certified bilingual and ESL instructors are available for most LEP students.

Teachers display high morale, enjoy considerable autonomy, and they exhibit higher, more focused energy in the conduct of their work than their counterparts in other districts. They also communicate high academic expectations to their students; believe all students can learn, recognize, and reward their students symbolically more often; and take more pride in their own instructional successes.

They also tend to use manipulatives and a literature-based language arts program, as well as instructional approaches that focus on meaning, encourage active student participation, and validate multicultural experiences.

Community Relations

In the high-performance district, parents are treated by professional staff as equal partners in the education process. Parents, or other family members who have sufficient time and

energy, are enthusiastically recruited as participants into school programs. Family members who cannot respond in this way by virtue of poverty or poor health often are given support by school programs designed to assist the children in combination with supports for parents. Board members, administrators, and teachers *respect* the cultural integrity of the diverse households and do not presume to impose assimilationist pressures on children or adults.

Support Services

In the high-performance district, schools collaborate with social and health agencies and police; have strong community support and involvement; integrate relations with diverse ethnic subcommunities; and, overall, make a much more pragmatically detailed, professionally aware investment in noneducational services than other districts. The district is unified in political determination to do what it takes to help students in all aspects of their lives.

The key is not fiscal resources. Poor districts sometimes provide good services. The difference is that the low-performing district does not invest politically, financially, or through contributions in time and effort to making sure that low-income newcomers are well-received and comprehensively served. For example, a welcoming center for newly arrived residents does not require major investments of resources.

In sum, while each factor is important in itself, what matters most is how the factors are combined and formulated into effective policies. The high-performing district is distinguished by a ubiquitous commitment on the part of people throughout the community and school system to serve disadvantaged children and youth effectively. It concentrates its political will and financial resources on fostering and mounting an ever-growing and changing *attack* on social inequities and on the challenges posed by poverty and other forms of educational disadvantage.

While little is known about how to engineer change in political cultures, we hope that the ideal types outlined here will make a contribution to those community leaders, parents, and educators who are committed to improving the conditions that shape the opportunity to learn of disadvantaged newcomers. We have attempted to identify some of the features and practices that seem to matter most and that are worth consideration by districts committed to helping educationally disadvantaged students.

The Context

While our goal has been to construct a plausible ideal school district, realistically the characteristics of a particular district should be compatible with its environment. The ability of a school district to achieve the ideals of the high-performance district will be strongly influenced by the community context. Therefore, it is necessary to take into account some of the contextual parameters that are likely to affect the feasibility of the ideal type. Two types of contexts were considered: *history and culture of the community*, and *district size and growth*.

History and Culture of the Community

While several complex patterns are represented among the cases, it appears that the high-performance district can be characterized by one of the following community patterns:

1. There is one large minority with a long-time presence in the community, which has grown rapidly over the past decade, while there has been a corresponding out-migration of some influential Anglo leaders; this pattern creates a power vacuum that the minority leaders can move into.

2. There has been a rapid influx of one or more minorities and there has not been a long history of subordination to a conservative Anglo group.

In addition, patterns of social integration reflect, if not predetermine, how a community is likely to respond to newcomers. In the high-performance district, while minorities cluster together, they also are dispersed throughout different parts of the community, not residentially sequestered into separate rigidly bounded neighborhoods.

In any case, what is most important is that services for children hinge mainly upon *local* community politics, political culture, and school organization. It will matter greatly who runs for local office, who gets elected to the school board, and how these leaders choose, mandate, and then support a superintendent who will reorganize the district to make it comprehensively successful in hosting new generations of culturally diverse children.

District Size and Growth

Size and growth affect a district's capacity to perform in conflicting ways. There is no simple conclusion, but perhaps it is fair to say that where poverty and minority status both are present in high degrees, *small* districts tend to have better prospects of organizing for success in their treatment of children. Notwithstanding the resource advantages of big, expanding districts, they are more likely to be hampered by fractiousness, dissent, community stratification, and bureaucratic pathologies.

However, size is not always decisive. Some of the disadvantages of scale can be overcome by using organizational strategies such as periodic surveillance, careful recruitment, and equitable methods for distributing resources.

Table 4
The High-Performance District[6]

	Category	Indicators
School Districts/organizations		
School board members	Composition	Fair representation of new immigrants as well as traditional segments of the community
	Goals	Board members unified among themselves and work together harmoniously Newcomers not regarded as a threat or an invasion Consensus between the board and superintendent on the priority of providing programs to help language minorities

table continues

[6]The high performance ideal type is a composite of selected features operating in a few districts that seem to be meeting the challenges of social diversity with relative success. There is no one overriding feature. What is important is the pattern, a constellation of critical attributes operating in concert. When all factors identified converge, a district seems to have more success in improving test scores than when the opposite conditions prevail.

	Category	Indicators
	Supportive behavior	Have given superintendent mandate to change Consistently support the superintendent's programs Make regular visits to schools
Superintendents	Personal attributes and behavior	Widely regarded as competent and well-informed about the needs of disadvantaged newcomers Visionary risk takers Work long hours
	Personal priorities	Views cultural diversity as a strength; not afraid of losing control because of population changes occurring in the district Give top resource priority to helping disadvantaged newcomers, determined to implement programs for non-English learners Concentrate on recruiting good bilingual teachers and multiethnic staff Are successful in obtaining funds from state, federal, and other sources
	Interpersonal relationships	Receptive and accessible to parents and teachers Collaborate closely with school board and leaders representing new immigrants Stay informed about programs Build good channels of communication with the schools and the community Associate with influential groups at the community, state, and federal levels, and obtain outside funding

table continues

	Category	Indicators
Top administrators	Emulation	Work overtime alongside the superintendent and support the superintendent's priorities
	Advocacy	Act as advocates for educationally disadvantaged children
	Communication	Communicate effectively and function as a team
Administrative structure	Centralized control	Top administrators maintain firm and vigorous centralized control over key decisions
	Balance between autonomy and control	Autonomy of principals and teachers contingent on their actions being consistent with the district's priorities Close monitoring of progress toward priorities Superintendent hand picks principals and actively participates in other critical personnel decisions Incentives to ensure that employees fulfill district goals; bonuses for bilingual certification
	Staffing patterns	Lean administrative staff Turnover among principals and teachers provides openings to recruit people dedicated to the district's goals
	Principals demonstrate:	Hire bilingual teachers Involved in the daily affairs of their school, spending most of their time in the hallways, playgrounds, and classrooms Stay informed about what various teachers are doing in their classes at any particular time

table continues

	Category	Indicators
	Principals demonstrate: (continued)	Work with members of the community and provide programs for parents
Educational programs	Innovation	Frequent curriculum revisions, and extensive communication via workshops and teacher centers
	Multicultural programs	Active programs with rich bilingual or multilingual components Hiring teachers with second-language skills has high priority
	High standards	High expectations that all children can learn Common program with high standards and clear instructional goals linked to the curriculum Focus on outcomes and authentic assessment
Teachers	Competence	Competent, hard working, and regularly visit parents Employ teaching strategies that challenge and engage students in meaningful activities and show respect for them and their culture
	Professionalism	Teachers respected and supported by the administration and parents, and participate in decisions Structures in place that promote collaborative decisionmaking (e.g., site-based management, team teaching) Structures in place that allow teachers to use classrooms and student groupings in flexible, creative ways (e.g., ungraded classes, cross-age teaching)

table continues

	Category	Indicators
	In-service training	Ample professional development opportunities provided by professional development centers, including multicultural programs
Community relations	Parent involvement	Parents actively recruited into school programs
	Community programs	Schools provide outreach educational and service programs for students' families
Support services	Welcoming center	A facility to welcome and diagnose the needs of new students and families, and provide counseling/referral services Programs to help parents develop language skills and learn how to help their children with homework
	Collaboration with social agencies	A comprehensive preventative health program closely affiliated with local health services Established relationships with social workers and police
History and culture of the community (community context will strongly influence the school district's ability to achieve high-performance district ideals)	Repercussions from immigration	Only one or two non-English speaking groups have settled in over a period of 5 or 10 years
	Core structure	Community not totally dominated by any single group Neighborhoods not highly segregated by race or ethnicity Racial, ethnic tensions absent; not divided by rancorous dissension No major financial or political issues to deflect the school board's attention from challenges of newcomers Active parent committees not dominated by Anglos
	District size and growth	Relatively small in population size

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